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SUBJECT: MIGRANT INTEGRATION AND REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT: CAN THE U.S. HELP EUROPE?

1. (U) This is an action message. See paragraph 20.

2. (U) Summary. Two unfolding migration-related crises have riveted Europe in recent days: 1) the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by a Muslim extremist of Moroccan descent, and 2) the uncontrolled arrival of shiploads of migrants in Italy and subsequent deportations to Libya. Europeans ask: how can the EU promote the integration of migrants, and how can the EU offer protection to legitimate refugees? USEU asks: can a VolVis program help Europe's search for effective responses? End Summary.

Assassination Deepens EU Concern Over Migrant Integration

3. (U) One of the latest hot-button issues in the EU is the integration of foreign migrants into host European societies. While the EU has long focused on ways to discourage international migration, it increasingly is resigned to the fact the movement of people will continue despite best efforts to develop countries of origin and enhance controls at the EU's external frontier. The rise of anti-immigration political parties across Europe, as well as increasing instances of racist attacks and xenophobia, have convinced many European policymakers of the need to consider a two-pronged approach to international migration. They advocate continuing efforts to reduce and control the flows of migrants to Europe, while simultaneously promoting measures to encourage integration of those already present.

4. (U) On November 9-11, the Dutch Presidency sponsored the first European Ministerial Conference on Integration, just as Europe was recovering from the shocking assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by a Muslim extremist on November 2. The assailant, an economically comfortable dual-national citizen of Moroccan descent, objected to Van Gogh's controversial portrayal of Muslim women as subservient.

5. (U) Around the same time of the murder, newspapers reported that growing numbers of European-born Muslims were traveling to Iraq to join the insurgency and conduct jihad, as well as assisting with terrorist attacks in Europe and neighboring regions. One newspaper quoted Gilles Kepel, author of *The War for Muslim Minds*, who argued that the feeling of marginalization is one of the root causes of the link between migrants and violence. He said that evidence from the arrest of Muslim extremists in Europe indicated that economic hardship is not a primary reason behind radicalism, as many of those arrested were educated professionals. Kepel further noted that economic success has not necessarily brought social integration.

6. (U) Responding to the communal unrest in The Netherlands which followed the assassination of Van Gogh, outgoing JHA Commissioner Vitorino appealed to both citizens and immigrants during a BBC interview. He said, "I think that the Muslim communities should mobilize in a more active way to be integrated. But, at the same time, we the Europeans should also recognize that for a long time we have neglected being more active in promoting integration." He noted that, "What is happening now in The Netherlands could happen anywhere in the EU." Vitorino's replacement also spoke of integrating migrants during his Parliamentary hearing on November 16, stressing the importance of education in striving towards mutual respect and tolerance.

7. (U) On November 17, the Dutch Prime Minister also urged the EU to work harder on integrating ethnic minorities during a debate at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. He was quoted in the press as saying, "The strong reactions and counter-reactions after the death of Van Gogh shows there is tension in our society. In Europe, we have to learn from one another in the area of integration of minorities." Also commenting on the fallout of the assassination, which included arson attacks on Muslim schools, mosques and churches in Holland, was the EU's anti-terrorism coordinator Gijs de Vries: "The bombing of schools anywhere in the world is an inexcusable act of barbarity," he told reporters.

Poor Economy Underscores Need for Immigrants

18. (U) Another Dutchman was also in the news on November 3, referring to a positive consequence of increased immigration to Europe. Wim Kok's scathing mid-term report of the Lisbon Strategy underscored the poor estate of Europe's economy and predicted a gloomier future based, in large part, on deteriorating demographics. His report noted that the "pure impact of aging populations will be to reduce the potential growth rate of the EU from the present rate of 2 percent to 2.25 percent to around 1.25 percent by 2040." The report goes on to state that, "...selective non-EU immigration will be needed to meet European labor market shortages and partly to offset the negative consequence of the 'brain drain'. It would be wise for Member States to prepare themselves timely and thoroughly for this decision because experience shows that the successful inclusion of migrants and ethnic minorities in society, and especially in the labor market, demands considerable and sustained effort."

EU Strategy for Migrant Integration

19. (U) The high-level conference on migrant integration, chaired by Dutch Minister for Aliens Affairs and Integration Rita Verdonk and supported by the Washington-based Migration Policy Group, sought to develop a list of "best practices" with regard to integration, particularly of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. A "Handbook for Integration" was developed for the conference and presented by the European Commission. Special workshops focused on: a) protecting the democratic rule of law and combating radicalization; b) the role of parents and mentors; and, c) fighting discrimination.

110. (U) On November 19, the European Council adopted conclusions regarding migrant integration, which included the following overview statements highlighting the reality of immigration and its benefits:

-- "Immigration is a permanent feature of European society. If the flow of immigrants -- who should be understood throughout the text as legally residing immigrants in the territory of the Member States -- is orderly and well managed, Member States reap many benefits. These include stronger economies, greater social cohesion and increased feeling of security, and cultural diversity. Taken together and across all Member States, these benefits advance the European process and strengthen the Union's position in the world. Therefore, the effective management of migration by each Member States is in the interest of all."

-- "A critical aspect of managing migration is the successful integration of legally residing immigrants and their descendants....It is vital for Member States to maintain and further develop societies in which newcomers feel welcome, which are defined by a spirit of mutual understanding and accommodation, and where there are clear expectations of all residents -- old and new."

111. (U) The common basic principles for the integration of legal immigrants adopted by the EU Council are as follows:

-- integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents;
-- integration implies respect for basic EU values;
-- employment is a key part of the integration process, and is central to the participation in and visible contributions to the host societies;
-- basic knowledge of the host society's language, history and institutions is indispensable to integration, and immigrants must acquire this basic knowledge;
-- education is also critical in this process;
-- access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to citizens is critical;
-- frequent interaction between immigrants and citizens, such as shared forums, inter-cultural dialogue, etc., is important;
-- practice of diverse cultures and religions must be safeguarded (unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law);
-- the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in formulating integration policies, especially at the local level, support integration;
-- mainstreaming integration policies throughout government is an important consideration; and,
-- developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust integration policies.

Identifying Refugees within the Broader Migration Flows

112. (U) While agreement has solidified around the integration of legal immigrants, divisions in the EU still exist over the

handling of clandestine migration flows, which often include people claiming a need for international protection. On November 19, the European Parliament voted to confirm the new European Commission, which noticeably did not include Rocco Buttiglione, Italy's nominee who was to have held the Justice, Freedom and Security (JFS) portfolio. Buttiglione first created a furor over reviving a controversial scheme to set up migrant camps in Libya to screen out economic migrants from asylum seekers attempting to enter the EU without authorization. (It was Buttiglione's comments on homosexuality and the role of women in society which proved his downfall, however, not his views on migration.)

13. (U) In prepared questions and answers for the Parliament, the new Italian nominee for JFS issues Franco Frattini reversed course regarding migrant camps. He stated: "The initial ideas put forward by the two Member States (Germany and Italy) address the specific situation of last countries of transit where migrants and refugees stop before entering the EU....Our first aim should be to address humanitarian needs and prevent the Mediterranean from becoming a "graveyard". A viable, legal and safe alternative to smuggling should be offered to those who find themselves in these circumstances who require protection and for whom there is not integration potential in these countries, amongst others by offering resettlement schemes to the EU. However, these policies simultaneously need to be able to address the mixed migratory character of the transitory populations in these countries and to facilitate information sharing on the real possibilities for migration to the EU....Any new approaches will however need to respect a number of basic principles, in particular full respect for the international legal obligations of Member States, including the full and inclusive application of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the non-refoulement principle, and the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms." In so declaring, Frattini washed his hands of the Libya venue and stepped away from Buttiglione's ill-timed initiative. Italy, however, pursues a bilateral agreement with Libya.

Encouraging Refugee Resettlement Programs

14. (U) The European Commission is currently drafting a proposal to establish a program to identify bona fide refugees in regions of origin and resettle them in Europe. JHA Administrator Phil Douglas, who is drafting the proposal, told PRMOFF the initiative would:

- be part of a package deal aimed at ensuring a "more orderly and manageable entry" into the EU (in other words, part of the crack down on illegal immigration);
- contribute to "safe access to the EU for those in need of international protection" by identifying in advance those abroad who are most desperately in need;
- address negative attitudes many Europeans have about asylum seekers (Douglas illustrated by noting that those fleeing conflict in Kosovo -- i.e., obvious refugees -- were greeted warmly in Europe unlike the "self-selecting" asylum seekers who do not have a clearly evident need of protection); and,
- facilitate integration via a comprehensive mechanism to prepare housing, job training and other tailor-made programs in advance of arrivals.

15. (U) Douglas stressed that the program would be modest, with no set annual quotas or ceilings. Target numbers would be notional, non-binding, and invoked to respond to specific, emerging situations. Furthermore, the numbers most probably would be derived from pre-existing Member State resettlement programs. (Note. Currently, the following annual refugee resettlement quotas exist in Member States: Sweden - 1000; Finland - 750; Denmark - 500; Netherlands - 500; UK - 500; Ireland - 10.) The European Commission should propose using the European Refugee Fund to financially augment these programs and in the process reserve some numbers for its own use. Funds might also be used to help other Member States initiate refugee resettlement programs. Despite the very modest nature of current thinking, which is heartily endorsed by the European Parliament, several Member States are "cooler than neutral" to the Commission's proposal. Germany is among those who object to any plan to bring in more refugees to Europe.

16. (U) A few reasons given by humanitarian workers in Europe who oppose refugee resettlement programs are:

- it's unpalatable to select some refugees over others;
- resettled refugees might get a "good" label while asylees end up stigmatized as "queue jumpers"; and,
- governments will have a pretext for sealing borders and access to asylum.

Speaking Out in Favor of Refugees

17. (U) Nevertheless, the EU has some high level supporters for increased protection, including resettlement opportunities, for needy refugees. Responding to the growing humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean and the German/Italian proposal for migrant camps, Swedish Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy Barbro Holmberg called on the EU to take more responsibility for refugees and for resettlement. In a letter to the editor of the Financial Times she wrote:

-- "People trying to get to Europe are being exploited by smugglers and risk their lives at sea. Some of them are asylum seekers. Others plan to enter Europe illegally. This is a human tragedy that we in the EU must do our utmost to solve."

-- "Resettlement is another way of sharing the responsibility for the refugees in the world. It is a way to give protection to individual refugees but it could also help solve protracted refugee situations, if used strategically. Four of the EU Member States have had resettlement programs for a long period of time. Another two have newly started programs. I urge more to follow the lead. In countries such as the U.S., Canada and Australia, resettlement has been an important part of asylum policy for a long time. They have large quotas each year. The EU ought to consider seriously having a common resettlement program."

-- "With the demise of Rocco Buttiglione's candidacy for the position of Justice & Home Affairs Commissioner, the support for migrant camps in North Africa has waned. The only remnants of this debate are plans for the EC to fund UNHCR capacity building measures in five North African countries -- no physical camps. As to the Swedish hope for resettlement, the EC plan for an EU-wide program has encountered serious opposition from Germany and other important Member States."

18. (U) Liberal MEP Graham Watson, whose party was instrumental in de-railing the Buttiglione nomination, made an eloquent pro-refugee appeal in an editorial published in the International Herald Tribune on November 17. Highlights include:

-- "Protecting those who seek asylum is an absolute duty, not just according to any basic notion of human charity but in international law. Refugees are helplessness incarnate. They are usually poor. They often barely speak the language of their destination country. They ask for help while offering nothing obvious in return." (Comment. Despite Watson's good intentions, this portrayal of refugees is apt to perpetuate the stereotype that refugees will drain social services and contribute little to countries which provide protection. End Comment.)

-- "Before his appoint to the new European Commission was blocked by the European Parliament, the commissioner-designate for JHA, Rocco Buttiglione, speculated publicly on the merits of reviving a plan that had been scrapped last year to develop a system of reception camps outside the EU's borders for asylum seekers. The camps, administered by states like Libya, Ukraine and Russia, would process applications for asylum in Europe...European states would effectively be outsourcing their obligations to refugees under international law."

-- "Treating refugees with respect imposes political and financial costs and demands tolerance and compassion, but it is a badge that we should wear with pride. The day we deem that cost too high to pay, we surrender that badge and that high ground, for good."

Potential VOLVIS: Helping Europe Handle Migrants and Refugees

19. (U) USEU would like to expand on its successful use of the voluntary visitor program in addressing issues that resonate through all the Member States by exploring the possibility of a volvis on integrating migrants and resettling refugees. These two issues are much in debate throughout the EU, and the international community as a whole could benefit if the U.S. is able to provide a positive example. Immigrants that feel a part of Europe should be less receptive to recruitment efforts by extremist organizations. Refugees in need of international protection can find a haven if more EU countries establish formal resettlement programs. At a meeting with EU officials on November 26, both the incoming Luxembourg Presidency and the European Commission said that a voluntary visitor program dealing with these issues should receive robust interest.

20. (U) Posts that would consider nominating either a government official or prominent NGO representative to participate should send an email to PRMOff Marc Meznar indicating interest, as well as any specific suggestions. If USEU receives enough positive responses, we will pursue the idea of a volvis with the Department of State.

